

**IN THE CLAIMS:**

**Please amend the claims of the above-identified application as follows so as to place the same in condition for allowance, or at least in better form for Appeal, pursuant to 37 CFR 1.116:**

1. Canceled, without prejudice
2. Canceled, without prejudice
3. Canceled, without prejudice
4. Canceled, without prejudice
5. Canceled, without prejudice
6. (Currently Amended) An image processing apparatus including a storing unit for storing image data and performing an output process based on the image data stored in the storing unit, comprising a controller including:  
means for designating image data stored in the storing unit, and accepting an instruction for concealment of the designated image data,  
means for detecting whether or not a processing unit for processing the image data is provided and an operation state thereof,  
means for deciding that the concealing method is to set authenticating information to the image data in the case where it is detected that the processing unit is provided and active, and for deciding that the concealing method is to encrypt the image data and to set authentication information in the case where it is detected that the processing unit is not provided and active,

means for concealing the designated image data by the decided concealing method based on the accepted instruction, and means for nullifying image data which is not designated by repeatedly overwriting the data which is not designated with meaningless data whereby the undesigned image data is prevented from recurring in said storing unit in reproducible form.

7. Canceled, without prejudice

8. Canceled, without prejudice

9.(Currently Amended) The image processing apparatus according to claim 8\_6, wherein  
~~the concealing method is encrypting the image data, and~~  
the controller includes  
means for decoding encrypted image data in the case of performing an output operation  
based on the image data.

10. (Currently Amended) The image processing apparatus according to claim 7\_6, wherein  
~~the concealing method is setting of authentication information to the image data;~~  
the controller further comprises:  
means for accepting authentication information;  
means for verifying the authentication information set to the image data with the accepted authentication information; and  
means for permitting the output process of the image data in the case where the authentication information set to the image data matches the accepted authentication information.

11. (Currently Amended) The image processing apparatus according to claim ~~10~~ 9, wherein  
the concealing method is encrypting the image data, and  
the controller further comprises:

means for accepting authentication information;  
means for verifying the authentication information set to the image data with the  
accepted authentication information; and  
means for permitting the output process of the image data in the case where the  
authentication information set to the image data matches the accepted  
authentication information

~~decodes encrypted image data in the case of performing an output operation based on the~~  
~~image data.~~

12. Canceled, without prejudice

13. Canceled, without prejudice

14. Canceled, without prejudice

15. Canceled, without prejudice

16. Canceled, without prejudice

17. Canceled, without prejudice